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News Release

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Colorado man sentenced for assaulting flight attendant

A 41-year-old Colorado Springs, Colo., man was sentenced today in federal court for assaulting a Northwest Airlines flight attendant during an Oct. 27, 2007, flight into the Twin Cities.

United States Magistrate Judge Arthur Boylan sentenced Gregory Thomas Abeyta to 90 days in prison and one year of probation on one count of misdemeanor simple assault March 18 in St. Paul. He was charged in federal court because the offense occurred onboard an aircraft.

According to an FBI affidavit, Abeyta was a passenger on a Northwest Airlines flight from Colorado Springs to the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport in Bloomington. The affidavit stated that Abeyta was served alcoholic beverages, and flight attendants stopped serving him drinks due to his behavior, comments and demeanor.

Despite being cut off from being served, Abeyta continued to ask for additional alcoholic beverages, and began yelling profanities at the flight attendants. According to the affidavit, one of the attendants sat down next to Abeyta in an attempt to calm him down, but was instead allegedly shoved twice by Abeyta.

Several passengers assisted flight attendants with placing flex-cuffs on Abeyta's hands and wrists to restrain him for the duration of the flight. The affidavit stated that Abeyta pushed, shoved and took swings at flight attendants and passengers, while shouting obscenities. Upon arrival at the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport, Abeyta was escorted off of the aircraft by airport police department officers.

This case was the result of an investigation by the FBI and the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport Police Department, and was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Lisa D. Kirkpatrick.